



San Bernardino Associated Governments

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•San Bernardino County Transportation Commission •San Bernardino County Transportation Authority
•San Bernardino County Congestion Management Agency •Service Authority for Freeway Emergencies

DATE: April 23, 2008

TO: State Clearinghouse

FROM: San Bernardino Associated Governments

SUBJECT: **NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT (EIR), AND NOTICE OF INTENT TO PREPARE AN ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (EA)**

The San Bernardino Associated Governments (SANBAG) will be the Lead Agency and will prepare the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) guidelines for the project identified below, while the Federal Transportation Administration (FTA) will be the Lead Agency for the Environmental Assessment (EA) consistent with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements. We request the views of all interested parties and agencies as to the scope and intent of the environmental information. Agencies will need to use the EIR prepared by our agency in considering permits or other approvals for this project

The project description, location, and the potential environmental effects are contained in the attached materials. A copy of the Initial Study is not attached.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The San Bernardino Associated Governments (SANBAG) is responsible for undertaking the planning, development and implementation of multimodal transportation projects in San Bernardino County. As part of SANBAG's efforts to improve mobility in San Bernardino County, SANBAG has initiated a formal alternatives analysis (AA) process in February 2008, which will investigate potential alternatives for passenger service along the 9.2-miles Redlands Subdivision between downtown San Bernardino and the University of Redlands. SANBAG proposes the introduction of passenger transportation service on the Redlands Subdivision between E Street and Rialto Avenue or San Bernardino Santa Fe Depot in the City of San Bernardino and the University of Redlands in the City of Redlands. Operation of the Redlands Corridor service will be pursuant to a shared-use agreement with the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF), which operates limited local freight train service along the western portion of the Redlands Subdivision.

The FRA has responsibility for oversight of the safety of railroad operations, including the safety of any proposed ground transportation system. For the proposed Redlands Corridor, it is anticipated that FRA would need to take certain regulatory actions prior to operation.

The Redlands Corridor EIR/EA will examine a range of passenger transportation alternatives along the Redlands Subdivision, a 9-mile railroad right-of-way owned by SANBAG that connects downtown San Bernardino to the University of Redlands. This EIR/EA will fully

describe site-specific environmental impacts and will identify specific mitigation measures to address those impacts and will incorporate design practices to avoid and minimize potential adverse environmental impacts. SANBAG will assess the site characteristics, size, nature, and timing of the proposed site-specific projects to determine whether the impacts are potentially significant and whether impacts can be avoided or mitigated. This EIR/EA will identify and evaluate reasonable and feasible site-specific alignment alternatives, evaluate the impacts from construction, operation, and maintenance of the Redlands Corridor project, and identify mitigation measures. Information and documents regarding the Redlands Corridor environmental review process will be made available through SANBAG's Internet site: <http://www.sanbag.ca.gov>.

Purpose & Need: The Redlands Corridor project is needed to meet anticipated growth in both regional and local transit markets, resulting from substantial increases in both population and employment in the San Bernardino/Redlands area. The Redlands Corridor Alternatives Analysis (AA) identifies five (5) specific project purposes: 1) Use right-of-way (ROW) asset to meet growing local and regional travel markets, 2) Encourage compact, sustainable growth patterns oriented around known transportation investments, 3) Enhance mass transit options for auto travelers taking I-10 in the AM and PM peak periods to and from destinations west of the study area, 4) Reduce vehicle miles of travel (VMT), fuel consumption and regional carbon footprint by encouraging mode shifts from auto to transit, and 5) Serve growing reverse commute demand..

Alternatives: The Redlands Corridor project will consider a No Build, Transportation System Management (TSM), and Build Alternatives.

No Build Alternative: To ensure an adequate baseline is likely to be developed, a No Build will be defined as either: 1) An alternative that incorporates "planned" improvements that are included in the fiscally constrained long-range plan for which need, commitment, financing, and public and political support are identified and are reasonably expected to be implemented, or 2) A conservative definition that adds only "committed" improvements – typically those in the annual element of the Transportation Improvement Program or local capital programs – together with minor transit service expansions and/or adjustments that reflect a continuation of existing service policies into newly developed areas. FTA does not approve a baseline alternative at this stage. The FTA action in Step 1 is simply to concur with the alternatives analysis study team that the No Build and Transportation System Management (TSM) alternative respond to the transportation problems in the corridor, that the policy and land-use setting is unbiased and consistent across the alternatives, and that the alternatives are defined in accordance with good planning practice.

TSM Alternative: The TSM alternative is defined as the best that can be done for mobility without constructing a new transit guideway. An acceptable TSM alternative emphasizes transportation system upgrades such as intersection improvements, minor road widening, traffic engineering actions, bus route restructuring, shortened bus headways, expanded use of articulated buses, reserved bus lanes, contra-flow lanes for buses and High Occupancy Vehicles (HOVs) on freeways, special bus ramps on freeways, expanded park/ride facilities, express and limited-stop service, signalization improvements, and timed-transfer operations. FTA will concur that the TSM alternative defined at the beginning of AA is likely to result in an acceptable alternative. This concurrence will be in the form of a memo or e-mail from the regional office.

The TSM alternatives for the Redlands Corridor will likely consist of branded, limited stop rapid bus services operating in mixed traffic lanes and utilizing signal priority at major intersections.

Build Alternatives: SANBAG proposes to introduce passenger transportation service on the Redlands Subdivision using vehicle technology and corresponding operating plan recommended in the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA). To date, the Build Alternatives will consider the following vehicle technologies: 1) Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), 2) Commuter Rail (using conventional diesel haul locomotives), and 3) Light Rail Transit using self-propelled Diesel Multiple Unit (DMU) or Electric Multiple Unit (EMU) trainsets.

Further engineering studies to be undertaken as part of this AA process will examine and refine alternatives along the Redlands Corridor, including track configuration options and the ultimate location of a western terminus at either E Street & Rialto Avenue or the San Bernardino Depot.

The AA process will also identify station location options based a several station location criteria, including travel time, train operations, potential connections to other transit services, ridership potential, local planning constraints/conditions. Alternatives station locations will be identified and evaluated in the AA process. Potential station locations to be evaluated include E Street/Rialto Avenue, Mill Street, Tippecanoe, California, Alabama, Downtown Redlands and University of Redlands. In addition, potential sites for turnback/layover train storage facilities and maintenance facility will be evaluated in the EIR/EA.

Potential Environmental Impacts The purpose of the EIR/EA is to explore in a public setting, the effects of the proposed project on the physical, human and natural environment. The FRA and/or FTA and SANBAG will continue with the evaluation of all significant environmental, social and economic impacts of the construction and operation of the Redlands Corridor project. Impact areas to be addressed include: transportation impacts, safety and security, land use and zoning; secondary development, land acquisitions, displacements, and relocations, cultural resource impacts, including impacts on historical and archaeological resources and parklands/recreation areas; neighborhood compatibility and environmental justice; natural resource impacts including air quality, wetlands, water resources, noise, vibration, energy, wildlife and ecosystems, including endangered species. Measures to avoid, minimize and mitigate all adverse impacts will be identified and evaluated. Study information is also available on the web – visit: www:sanbag.ca.gov/projects/redlands-transit.html

Responses to this Notice of Preparation should be sent by mail or email to:

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